



BETSY LEHMAN CENTER

for Patient Safety and Medical Error Reduction

Backgrounder

History

Betsy Lehman was a talented *Boston Globe* health reporter, wife of a cancer researcher, and mother of two young girls. She died in 1994 as the result of a preventable medical error when she was being treated for breast cancer. Her shocking and tragic death received a great deal of media attention and became a catalyst for change in approaches to patient safety both in Massachusetts and nationally.

Ten years later, the *Betsy Lehman Center for Patient Safety and Medical Error Reduction (BLC)* was established within the state's Executive Office of Health and Human Services, and operated within the Department of Public Health. From 2004-2009, the center convened numerous expert panels, conferred an annual patient safety recognition award, and worked closely with other stakeholders to reduce medical harm in Massachusetts.

After a several year hiatus, BLC recently was reestablished as an independent agency within the Center for Health Information and Analysis (CHIA) pursuant to the health care quality improvement, cost reduction, and transparency provisions of Chapter 224 of the Acts of 2012. BLC receives operational support from CHIA, and has a separate four member board comprised of the Attorney General, Secretary of Health and Human Services, Undersecretary of Consumer Affairs, and Executive Director of CHIA.

BLC Mandate

BLC's enabling statute confers a broad mandate to enhance patient safety in the Commonwealth through research, analysis, and dissemination of information. Among the roles envisioned for the agency:

- Coordinating the efforts of state health care regulators and licensed providers to work as part of a total system of patient safety and to help them meet their responsibilities for patient safety and medical error reduction;
- Developing mechanisms for consumers to be included in a statewide program for improving patient safety;
- Analyzing data and research to support patient safety initiatives;
- Administering an education and research program for health care professionals, facilities, agencies, and the general public to increase awareness about medical error as well as error prevention strategies; and
- Disseminating information about evidence-based best practices to reduce medical errors and enhance patient safety.

Leadership

Betsy Lehman Center is led by **Executive Director Barbara Fain**. She was appointed by a board whose members are Attorney General Martha Coakley, Secretary of Health and Human Services John Polanowicz, Undersecretary of Consumer Affairs Barbara Anthony, and Áron Boros, Executive Director of CHIA.

Barbara Fain's professional experience spans every sector with a focus on law and health policy. From 2007-2013, she consulted in the areas of policy development and analysis, public engagement, and strategic planning for government agencies, academic institutions, policy think tanks, and healthcare organizations. Her work for the MA Department of Public Health and the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies focused on developing standards for the allocation of scarce medical resources in pandemics and other disasters.

From 1994-2005, Barbara was an Assistant Attorney General in the MA Office of the Attorney General where she oversaw the state's Community Benefit Guidelines for hospitals and health plans and led a variety of other health policy initiatives. From 2005-2006 she was executive director of a health policy research center at Harvard Law School.

Barbara received her BA from Brown University in 1981 where she majored in biomedical ethics. In 1987 she completed a joint degree in law and public policy, receiving a JD from the UC Berkeley School of Law and an MPP with a concentration in health policy from the Harvard Kennedy School. Barbara is currently a senior adjunct lecturer at the Tufts University School of Medicine where she teaches public health law.

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